MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

No. 11. PRICE, FIVE CENTS.

MARION MARLOWE'S DISAPPEARANCE

OR

ALMOST A CRIME

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York City.

Copyright, 1900, by Street & Smith. All rights reserved.

Entered at New York Post-Office as Second-Class Matter.

MY QUEEN
A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.
Entered According to Act of Congress, in the year 1900, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

No. 11. NEW YORK, December 8, 1900. Price Five Cents.

MARION MARLOWE'S DISAPPEARANCE;

OR,

ALMOST A CRIME.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

A HORSEWHIPPING ON BROADWAY.

"So she is an actress, is she? Well, that is all I want to know. Those women are all alike—a lot of shameless, brazen creatures!"

This remark was made by a red-faced, flashily-dressed man, who was standing just outside of the entrance to a Broadway theatre, about eleven o'clock one crisp morning in the late fall.

"But she's different, Watson; she's just a simple country girl," said his companion, a youth of nineteen, who was a little more refined in appearance. "She don't wear low necks, nor tights, nor any of those things, and the papers can't think of anything too good to say about her."

"Bosh! That don't cut any ice!" said the red-faced man, sneeringly. "That only means that she's got a friend at court. There's some fellow on the papers that she's standing in with. Oh, you can't tell me anything about actresses, sonny."

"Perhaps I can tell you a little something about them, Mr. Dan Watson," said a gentleman who had been standing just a few feet back in the entrance, and who had heard distinctly every word that the fellow had said.

As he stepped out toward the vile-mouthed fellow his black eyes snapped ominously, and his handsome face was pale with anger.

"If you were speaking of the lady who just entered the manager's office, I can give you some information. May I inquire if you happened to be speaking of that lady?"

Dan Watson, who was a well-known but

not over-popular clubman and "all around sport," shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. He had caught the gleam from the black eyes, and, recognizing their owner, was in no hurry to answer the question.

"We were talking of Marion Marlowe, the star actress in this show," spoke up the man's companion, quickly. "I said she was all right, and he says——"

"I heard what he said," broke in the gentleman, excitedly. "He said that all actresses were alike, and that none were decent, and, if he was a gentleman, I would give him my card at once, but as he is only a cad, I will give him a horsewhipping instead!"

As he spoke, he stepped quickly toward a private carriage that was standing at the curb, and, as he did so, the coachman leaned over with a grin, and handed him the horsewhip.

"Better put that up, Archie Ray!" said the red-faced man, warningly, but the gentleman only tightened his hold on the whip and walked directly up to him.

"You are a coward to attack a woman's fair name," he said, in a ringing voice; "and as it is by no means the first time you have done it—I've heard of you and your vile tongue before—I intend to give you something that will make you more careful in future!"

He stepped back a little and raised the whip.

"Touch me with that, if you dare!" shouted the man, hoarsely.

"Give it to him—he deserves it! I heard what he said!" cried another gentleman, stepping out of the entrance.

"Don't spare him, Mr. Ray," begged the coachman from his box. "The hound insulted Miss Marlowe. He deserves it richly."

The youth who had been talking with the man looked on with interest. The clubman was no friend of his; only a casual acquaintance.

"Will you apologize for the words you uttered about the lady?" asked the holder of the whip, sternly. "I am a friend of Miss Marlowe, and I demand an apology."

"Her lover, I suppose," muttered the man, with an oath. Then he continued, angrily:

"Apologize! No! I said she wasn't decent, and I say it again! No actress is decent! They are bad, the whole lot of them!"

The words had not passed his lips when a beautiful girl stepped out of the theatre to the street.

As her foot touched the flags she saw a small group of men at one side of the door; then there was the swish of a horsewhip through the air and a stinging blow. She was in time to see that it was her own escort who had delivered it.

Once, twice, the lash descended about the fellow's shoulders, then the young girl darted forward and put her hand on her friend's arm.

"Oh, Mr. Ray! Don't!" she cried, in anguish. "Whatever he has done, pray, pray don't strike him!"

"He deserves it, lady," said one of the bystanders. "He called you names and said you wasn't decent."

Marion Marlowe bit her lips, while her face turned as pale as death. This man had insulted her, and it was for this he was being punished.

The lash descended again, and yet the fellow had not moved. He stood glaring at his assailant with one hand resting on his hip pocket.

"Do stop, Mr. Ray," pleaded Marion again, and this time she stepped almost in front of her angry escort.

There was a quick motion of the clubman's hand and a sharp cry from the crowd. Then the flash from a revolver was followed by a loud report.

With a shriek of agony Marion Marlowe dropped to the sidewalk.

CHAPTER II.

TWO HONORABLE RIVALS.

Fifteen minutes later the wounded girl lay on a sofa in the office of her friend, Dr. Reginald Brookes, while Archie Ray paced back and forth in an outer apartment almost groaning in anguish.

"It is all my fault," he said, over and over. "I had no business to notice the fellow, but by Heaven, how could I stand by and hear that brute insult her! I could have killed him outright, yet I ought not to have touched him!"

"Miss Marlowe is coming around all right," said a sweet voice in his ear. Miss Lee, the doctor's office nurse, had just come out of the inner office to bring the good tidings.

"Thank God!" cried Archie Ray, with a glad look springing into his eyes. "Then the wound is not fatal! You have taken a terrible load off my conscience."

"It is not even serious," said the pretty nurse, smiling. "It is only a flesh wound and will probably be painful, but the doctor thinks she will be able to go on with her engagement."

"It was my bad temper that brought this upon her," said Mr. Ray, sighing.

The nurse smiled sweetly as she answered, in a soft voice:

"No man with blood in his veins could have done differently, sir. You were right to horsewhip that fellow, for how could you know that he was carrying a revolver?"

"He'll not use it again, in a hurry," said Mr. Ray, scowling. "The fellow was arrested before I left and, fortunately for me, I have three reliable witnesses. Besides, he has always borne a bad reputation."

"You knew him then?" said Miss Lee, quickly.

"As a loafer around club-rooms, a hard drinker, and in many other ways a very suspicious character," answered Mr. Ray. "He belongs to three of the best clubs and pays his dues promptly, yet not a gentleman in any one of them cares to be seen in his company. This affair will end his career as a clubman, though, and I shall have him looked up at once, so as to be ready in case he should bother me in the future."

"I hope he goes to State prison for life," said the nurse, spitefully. "Miss Marlowe is so sweet that I am in love with her myself. You would not have been half a man if you hadn't punished the fellow for his words."

"Thank you for your sympathy," said Mr. Ray, smiling, but he could not quite forgive himself yet for bringing this trouble upon Marion.

Archie Ray had loved Marion Marlowe for many months, but he never realized just how much she was to him until this accident hap-

pened. Now, as he faced the office door, he was almost overcome by his emotions, for, if this brave girl should die, it would surely drive him insane.

The nurse's words had brought him the first ray of comfort. If Marion was not badly injured, there was still something to live for.

When Dr. Brookes came out of the private office he grasped Mr. Ray's hand cordially. The fact that they were rivals for the love of this fair young girl had never yet detracted an atom from their regard for each other.

"Only a flesh wound, thank Heaven," was the doctor's first words. 'The bullet passed between her arm and side, but the under arm alone is scratched a little. An inch either way and I would have had a deal of trouble, but she is comfortable now. Will you go in and see her?"

Archie Ray was still holding the physician's hand.

"You heard how it happened?" he asked, a little eagerly.

"A big brute of a fellow made nasty remarks about her and you hit him. I would have done it myself—only I'd have gone a bit further. I'd have licked him until he fired that shot, and then—I'd have killed him."

The young physician's eyes were snapping dangerously. There was another hand-shake which was even more hearty and genuine.

"Now I can go in, I guess," said Mr. Ray, smiling, "but somehow, I have blamed myself so deeply for this accident to Marion that I was fast getting to that state where I was ashamed to meet her."

"Nonsense, old boy! She'll like you better than ever, now!" said the doctor, laughing, but the laugh was followed by a sigh that his companion did not notice.

"A woman is bound to admire her protector," he added; "and it was no fault of yours that you did not protect her. You were shielding her good name, which is everything to Marion, and of course you did not know that the fellow had a pistol."

"I wish I had" said Archie Ray, shutting his teeth, viciously; "but there was no time to do anything but get him arrested after the shot. I had to get Marion into the carriage and bring her to you—and will I ever forget that short ride to this office!"

"You thought she was dead, no doubt, you poor fellow! Well, she was white enough to be dead, all right. I thought so myself when I first saw her in the carriage. So you see, old man, I know exactly what you suffered."

The two noble young lovers stood looking at each other silently for a moment It was an extraordinary situation, and both of them realized it. Both loved Marion Marlowe, and each had asked her to marry him, and both, so far as they knew, had received the same answer. Marion was only seventeen; she had not learned her heart, and, besides, she was ambitious for fame and for usefulness in the world. She could not seriously think as yet of marriage with either.

No two rivals for the hand of one fair girl ever felt toward each other as did Mr. Ray and Dr. Brookes. Both were men of honor, of loyalty, and principle. They asked nothing in the war of love but "a fair field and no favor."

CHAPTER III.

AN OPINION ON STAGE KISSING.

When Archie Ray entered the private office, Marion held out her hand to him. She was sitting in a big, comfortable chair, looking pale, but smiling brightly.

"Oh, Marion! Will you ever forgive me for this injury?" cried Mr. Ray, penitently. Marion's merry laugh rippled out in amusement.

"Oh, I'm not hurt a bit! It's only a scratch!" she said, gayly; "and I'm sure that fellow that you whipped must be smarting terribly. You must have hurt him dreadfully, and yet he never moved a muscle."

"His hide was as tough as his appearance, I guess," said Mr. Ray, smiling; "but I shall never forgive myself for not being more cautious. I might have known by his looks that he would carry concealed weapons."

Marion burst out laughing again as Mr. Ray drew a chair up close to her.

"What an ad. this will be," she said, with a roguish twinkle in her eyes. "Why, I am sure it ought almost to give me an increase in salary."

Mr. Ray's face darkened in spite of her jest. It was always an unpleasant thought to him that Marion was obliged to earn her living.

He was independently wealthy and could have given her absolute ease, and it cut him to the heart that she should prefer this bitter struggle for existence.

"Yes, I am sure we will have a full house to-night," she went on, merrily; "and that will mean that Mr. Temple will be more pleased with his 'star' than ever, and I shall have a lot of curtain calls and any quantity of roses."

"And which do you like best?" asked Mr. Ray, trying to smile.

"Oh, the roses, I guess," said the young girl, quickly. "The roses are so fresh, so sweet and so pure, and sometimes the applause—well, it sounds shallow, I fancy."

"Nonsense! No one ever applauded you except from the heart," said Mr. Ray, looking down at her gently; "your acting is superb, yet I wish you were not an actress."

"And I love it—at least, some parts of it," replied the girl, quickly. "Of course, there is a lot about the profession that is uninteresting and unpleasant, but the acting itself is simply delightful."

Her great gray eyes glowed radiantly and her face flushed as she spoke. It seemed to Archie Ray that she had never looked more beautiful.

There was a light tap on the door as Miss Lee, the nurse, entered. As she caught sight of Marion, her eyes sparkled merrily.

"You are feeling all right now, aren't you, dear?" she asked, sweetly. "You'll soon be able to go home and get thoroughly rested."

"Yes, I must go," said Marion, "for I must be entirely well by evening. Oh, dear, I do hope that every one on the stage will keep in their places this evening."

She had moved her arm and felt a slight twinge of pain, but she smiled heroically so that no one should notice it.

"That handsome Mr. Gordon who plays the opposite part to you, Miss Marlowe—you must warn him to be careful when he embraces you," said the nurse, smiling.

Another heavy frown rested on Archie

Ray's features, but Marion was looking at the nurse and did not notice it.

"You have seen the play, then?" she asked, with interest.

"Oh, yes, I have seen it twice," said Miss Lee, enthusiastically. "Thanks to the doctor, I am kept supplied with tickets."

"And do you like me in the part?" asked Marion, innocently. "Please be honest, now, for I do love a candid critic."

"I think you are beautiful," cried the girl, impulsively; "and in the last act, where Mr. Gordon kneels at your side and kisses your hand, I have just all I can do to keep from shouting 'Bravo!' "

Poor Archie Ray ground his teeth now and turned away. He had seen the play once, and this final act haunted him. As foolish as it was he had almost wanted to murder Gordon.

"Strange that I don't feel that way toward the doctor," he was thinking now, and then it came to him that Ed. Gordon was an actor, a fellow of no standing in society, while Dr. Brookes was his equal—a gentleman of wealth, refinement and honor.

"Marion shall have her chance with the two of us," he had decided, grimly, when the young physician came in to look after his fair patient.

"All ready to go home," was Marion's greeting as he entered. "Thanks to you and Miss Lee, I am feeling splendidly, doctor. Now, if you will please let me go home to Sister Dollie, I'll be almost well, I am sure, by to night."

"I think I had better pin a sign on that arm," said the doctor, laughing. "A 'Keep Off' sign, or something of that sort, for every one that touches you will hurt you, Miss Marlowe."

"Oh, I shall warn them all to be careful," said the girl, laughing; "and you know I'm not acting in any love-sick plays. I have decided that no man shall embrace me in any scene on the stage. When I have to do that I shall seek another vocation."

"But how will you prevent it?" asked Miss Lee, quickly. "Why, all of the best plays have lots of love scenes in them, and who wants to see an iceberg for an actress."

"I don't, for one," said Marion, laughing; "but do I act like an iceberg in my love scenes?" she asked, quickly.

"Indeed you do not, but suppose Mr. Gordon was to kiss your lips instead of your hand? You'd have to do it if it was in the part, Miss Marlowe."

Both of the young men listened breathlessly for Marion's next words. They had thought of this often, yet neither had dared to mention it to her.

"Well, in the first place," said Marion, soberly, "I should ask the manager to allow me to alter those little details of the act, and then I would try to make my love scene sufficiently impassioned so that no one would miss the embrace. I do not think kissing necessary, although, of course, one can always 'fake' it. Many actors and actresses make believe to kiss. Why, sometimes they hate each other, so how could they do otherwise?"

"True actors should forget all these realities," said the nurse, thoughtfully. "For my part, I consider that a stage kiss amounts to nothing."

"Well, it amounts to so much to me that

I shall never give one," said Marion, firmly. "When I can't 'fake' or substitute I will leave the stage. I will not lose my self-respect by any such form of pollution."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SWEETEST OFFERINGS.

It was just as Marion had said. She had received a wonderful advertisement, for every evening paper in the city had a full account of the shooting.

The first extras astonished her a little, for the report was that she was dead—killed instantly by the bullet.

After that the different issues began getting nearer the truth, and by the last edition the story was fairly accurate.

The insulting fellow with the pistol was too well known not to add any interest to the affair, and the papers started in systematically to investigate his character.

They traced him from an obscure birth to a man of boundless means, but the missing link, which none could supply, was where and how he got his money.

As a clubman his record was exactly as Archie Ray had said. He was looked upon as suspicious and undesirable. No woman's name was sacred on his lips, and there were innumerable reports of his bad treatment of a wife, but, just at this time, no such person could be located.

Mr. Ray decided to prosecute him to the extent of the law, although he offered willingly to pay the fine for having assaulted the fellow.

When Marion appeared before the footlights that night she was greeted with thunderous applause, and at the first curtain call she was forced to make a speech and explain to her admirers that she had not really been much injured.

When she got to her dressing-room after the first act she found it almost filled with roses. They had been sent in at the stage door as well as over the footlights, and the tears sprang to her eyes as she recognized the sweet tokens of affection.

"You must have scores of admirers," said one of the company, a little curiously, as she stopped to look at them. "See, here are the cards—may I read them, Miss Marlowe? It isn't at all likely that I'll know any one of them."

"Oh, I did not think to look at the cards," said Marion, honestly. "I was just devouring those 'Jacks' and American Beauties. Do read them, by all means, and out loud, if you please, Miss Ellis. I haven't a minute to stop, for I take so long in dressing."

Miss Ellis began reading the cards, while Marion smiled happily. She had guessed the first few names, so they did not surprise her.

"Mr. Ray, Dr. Brookes, and Mr. Everett," read Miss Ellis; "then here's a basket from a lady without any name, two bouquets from 'admirers who desire to remain anonymous,' and a monstrous basket of roses and orchids from 'your old friend, Bert Jackson.'"

"What!" cried Marion, sharply, as she turned from the glass. "Bert Jackson back from Europe! It does not seem possible."

She rushed over and took the card from Miss Ellis' hand, and a smile of amusement dimpled her fair features.

"Mr. Albert Canfield Jackson," she read, on a neatly engraved card.

"Dear old Bert!" she cried. "So he has

really arrived at the dignity of cards, and to think that he was only a Poor Farm lad. Now, where in the world did he get that 'Canfield?' "

Suddenly it occurred to her where her old friend had found his name. He had borrowed it from the gentleman who had recently adopted him.

"I shall be glad, so glad, to see Bert," went on Marion, gayly. "You see, we were friends at home in the country, but since we came to New York, Bert has been adopted by a very rich man. Still, in every letter I get from him, he says he still loves me."

She was smiling merrily as if this was a huge joke, but Miss Ellis was quite serious when she finally answered:

"Some boys are as honest in their love as men, Miss Marlowe! Perhaps 'Bert' does really love you and will want you to marry him some day. You wouldn't turn him down because he was once on a Poor Farm, would you?"

"On the contrary," said Marion, quickly, "I admire Bert for that. Why, it is perfectly wonderful how that boy has come up From a homeless, penniless orphan he is now the son of a wealthy family."

"I'd like to know him," said Miss Ellis, frankly; "but then, perhaps he's so rich he would only laugh at an actress."

"Bert honors a good woman whatever her vocation," said Marion, calmly. "I am only an actress myself, yet you can see that Bert is fond of me."

"Oh, but you are different! You are a star," cried Miss Ellis, quickly. "Then you are beautiful and talented and everything else, Miss Marlowe. Every man would love you. You could have thousands of lovers."

"Goodness! I don't want so many as that," said Marion, laughing. "One at a time, please, and I could even do without one, although I am free to confess that honest affection is appreciated."

"Ed. Gordon loves you," said Miss Ellis, shortly. "He's been daffy over you ever since you came to the company."

"I have no proof of that," began Marion, calmly, but Miss Ellis interrupted her to finish her sentence:

"And Mr. Temple is as crazy as a loon over you," she said, complacently. "Ever since he turned Lemadrid down, he has been at your feet, Miss Marlowe."

"That is not the place where I care to have a man," said Marion, haughtily. "All women spurn what grovels at their feet. A man must be a man to win my admiration, Miss Ellis."

Her companion had just gone to the door in answer to a knock.

"Here are some more flowers, Miss Marlowe," she said, sweetly. "Some heliotropes and pinks in a beautiful vase, and, let me see, the name is Mr. Thomas Merton."

"Dear Mr. Merton! So he has not forgotten me," said Marion, delightedly.

Miss Ellis set the flowers down and stood staring at them, silently.

"Mr. Merton and his sister are old friends of mine," began Marion, softly; then, as she caught sight of her companion's face, she stopped abruptly.

"Dear me, what are you thinking of, Miss Ellis?" she asked, quickly.

"I was thinking that my words would

soon be verified," said Miss Ellis, laughing. "If they keep on coming in you'll soon have a thousand, Miss Marlowe."

CHAPTER V.

MARION'S LOYALTY.

For the first time in her life Marion began to think seriously over this old affection of Bert's, and to wonder if the boy was really earnest in the matter. He was only a year older than she was, but he was a large, manly-looking fellow, and, no doubt, these few months of travel had improved him wonderfully.

Mr. Canfield, his foster father, was a very wealthy man; moreover, he was without a child in the world, and there was no doubt that he would leave Bert a magnificent fortune. This fact in itself did not interest Marion in the least, although she was glad for Bert's sake that his days of poverty were over.

She kept thinking about him all the rest of the evening, and every time any one applauded with unusual vehemence she turned her eyes over the footlights in that particular direction.

But if Bert were in the theatre he did not make his presence known, and Marion grew more and more eager to see him as the play progressed.

In the few minutes before the last act began Ed. Gordon came to her. She was standing in the doorway of her dressing-room, taking a last look at her roses.

"Will you allow me to add this to your laurels, Miss Marlowe?" he asked, softly, at the same time holding out to her an exquisite bunch of orchids. Marion took them with a smile that was as sad as it was tender. She had learned to pity Mr. Gordon, for she knew that he was hopelessly in love with her.

Before she had ever acted with him he had shown a marked fondness for her, but every matinée and night that they acted that last scene together she felt instinctively that he meant every word of his impassioned declaration, and that he would almost have given his life to have received one word of encouragement from her.

But Marion had her reasons for disliking Mr. Gordon.

He had been distrustful of her once, even to the point of questioning her honor, and, to a girl like Marion, this offence was fatal. She might forgive, but she could never forget or overlook such a transgression.

"You are very kind, and I thank you so much," she said, sweetly, as she took his orchids; "but do look at my conservatory, Mr. Gordon. Miss Ellis and I have been reveling in its beauty almost to the extent of forgetting our cues all the evening."

Ed. Gordon bit his lips as he glanced in at the door. Then the jealousy in his nature leaped to the surface.

"Your admirers are legion, I should say, Miss Marlowe," he said, shortly. "I wonder you are not above treating your fellow mortals civilly."

"How absurd," said Marion, with a merry laugh. "As if admiration and love could make me other than humble. Why, Mr. Gordon," she went on, her beautiful eyes filling with tears, "do you know what I have been thinking of ever since my flowers be-

gan to arrive? Well, I have been wondering down in my heart if I really deserve them."

She looked so radiantly beautiful with her great calm eyes gazing so honestly into his face that Ed. Gordon had to choke back the words that were tormenting him.

If he could only take this magnificent girl to his heart; but no, not even on the stage was he allowed such an honor.

"You deserve to have the whole world at your feet—wealth, affection, fame," muttered Gordon, hoarsely. "As if a few paltry flowers could express a man's affection. There are no emblems which express true love, Miss Marlowe."

"But there are words and deeds," said Marion, quickly. "When a man loves he will find a way to demonstrate his affection, and flowers are certainly a token of regard—perhaps the sweetest token that is within human possibility."

"Will you please wear one of my orchids, Miss Marlowe?" whispered the actor, suddenly. "Wear it anywhere—in sight or out of sight, so that you have it about you. It can easily be hidden, even behind a bunch of your roses."

Marion glanced at the eager face and burning eyes, then, with a gentle hand, she detached one of the orchids from the cluster.

"Certainly I will wear it," she said, with one of her merry laughs. "And thank you, Mr. Gordon, for giving me a suggestion."

Mr. Gordon looked at her as she stepped back into the room and began selecting a flower from each of the different offerings.

"Why, you are spoiling your flowers," called Miss Ellis, as she came bounding into the dressing room. Marion was smiling as she hastily put her collection together. She had chosen five flowers besides Mr. Gordon's orchid, and was tucking them all into her belt together.

Now that Miss Ellis had come Ed. Gordon moved away slowly. He had only waited to see that his orchid was among the number that were to grace the fair girl during the final act.

"You are spoiling your flower garden," said Miss Ellis, again; "and, dear me, Miss Marlowe, what a queer bouquet you are making."

Marion put in her last pin and then fingered her flowers lightly.

"A pink from Mr. Merton's, a bit of heliotrope from Mr. Everett's, a 'Jack' from Mr. Ray's, an American Beauty from Dr. Brookes', then there's an orchid apiece from Mr. Gordon and Bert Jackson."

She smiled mischievously at Miss Ellis as she finished her enumeration.

"You don't mean to show any preference, to-night, at least, do you, Miss Marlowe?" asked Miss Ellis, with a smile. "But my! ain't you afraid you'll make them all jealous?"

Marion did not answer, except with a ripple of laughter, but, as she started for the stage, her eyes grew sadder.

"No, my dear Miss Ellis," she whispered to herself, "you need have no fear—I shall show no preference this evening."

CHAPTER VI.

OLD FRIENDS AND TRUE.

At the close of the last act Marion was again in a dilemma. A dozen notes had been sent in, and, as she glanced them over, her

brow became crossed with the tiny wrinkles which betoken perplexity. Ed. Gordon, not daring to ask, had written her one of the notes. In it he begged the honor, just for once, of taking her to supper.

Marion crumpled the note in her hand and then dropped it in her pocket. For a moment she was almost angry at her fellow actor's presumption.

"As if I could ever forget," she murmured to herself. Then she hastily tore open a note from Thomas Merton.

"My sister and I are in the audience and are longing to congratulate you," he wrote. "Will it be possible for you to join us in a little supper?"

Marion hastily seized a paper and pencil and scribbled an answer. It was to the effect that she "was sorry, but it would be impossible."

A boy was soon handing the note to Mr. Merton, who had mentioned where her answer would reach him.

Marion's next note was from a stranger, whom she had never seen—a "Johnny," as they call them behind the scenes, but who really deserved a much stronger epithet.

This she destroyed in disgust and tore open another. It was from Howard Everett, a musical critic, and one of her best friends, but for reasons of her own she was obliged to disappoint him also.

Then came notes from Mr. Ray and Dr. Brookes—the latter claiming that as her physician, he "really ought to see her safely home and her arm made comfortable."

Marion burst out laughing at the doctor's ruse, but she had a notion in her head that she should get along very well without him, for she had planned exactly how she should get home, and then Dollie was there to take care of her.

There were two other notes, but Marion hardly gave them a glance, they were from "Johnnies" also, and soon followed their companion.

Miss Ellis came in as she was tearing them up, and the honest girl could not help expressing her opinion.

"It's strange how little a girl cares for admiration when she has lots of it," she said, solemnly. "Why, do you know, Miss Marlowe, I never got a 'mash note' in my life and I would like to have one, even if it came from an old bald-headed first-nighter."

"Well, there are three you can have," said Marion, laughing, as she pointed to the scattered scraps of paper on the floor. "But for my part I think you have been lucky, dear; they are both an insult and a nuisance to any actress."

"Oh, I don't think they mean it that way; they are just fools," said the girl, blandly. "They admire you a lot and don't know how to show it. I wouldn't be surprised if some of them were real good fellows."

"They may be," said Marion, dubiously, "but they are a lot of boors. Imagine a man trying to force his attentions upon a woman. It is only because we are actresses that they dare try it."

"I guess that is so," said Miss Ellis, thoughtfully. "There are lots of society women whom they might insult, but, some way, they always take it out on the 'professional woman.'"

"Society women are protected in a way," said Marion, scornfully. "They can wear

low neck dresses at balls and parties, flirt desperately with other men besides their husbands, and even do things that we actresses would scorn to do, yet, whoever heard of their getting notes from the 'Johnnies?'"

"Well, perhaps they do, only we don't hear of it," said Miss Ellis, eagerly. "We actresses are public property, to all appearances. Just because we have to earn our living by our talents we are sneered upon. If we took in washing we would probably be respected."

"I doubt it," said Marion, with a bitter laugh. "A working woman has just as hard a life as we do—there is no protection for any woman unless she has money."

"Well, you'll always make people respect you, anyway, Miss Marlowe," said the girl, decidedly. "Why, even the manager, Mr. Temple, says you are a queen among women. I heard him telling Ed. Gordon only last night that you had changed his opinion of the sex completely."

"Well, it needed to be changed," said Marion, a little snappily. "Mr. Temple has learned a little about us since I knew him—before that time he was woefully ignorant."

Marion had finished dressing for the street and was all ready to go now, but she stood in the doorway to wait for Miss Ellis.

"What is to be done with the flowers, Miss?" asked the property man, as he passed at that moment. "Mr. Temple says, can he take them and you home in a carriage?"

Marion seemed to be thinking and did not reply for a minute.

"Johnson, you live right next door to a hospital, don't you?" she asked, suddenly.

The man nodded, and looked at her a little surprised.

"See here, do something for me," said Marion, with one of her winning smiles.

"Take this money and get some one to help you with the flowers. They can be watered and left as they are to-night, but please deliver them at the hospital bright and early in the morning."

"I'll do it, miss," said the man, who was a great admirer of the star.

Marion smiled at him sweetly, and then went down the stairs with Miss Ellis.

"All out," cried the watchman, just as they reached the stage door. The lights were lowered behind the scenes just as Marion reached the sidewalk, but it was a glorious night and the air was refreshing.

"Are you going to walk, Miss Marlowe?" asked Miss Ellis, in astonishment.

There was a carriage coming rapidly down the street and Marion paused a moment before she answered.

"No, dear, not to-night, although it is a beautiful night," she said. "But the fact is, I have banished all my new friends for one night, because I feel it in my bones that one of my old friends is coming for me."

"Is that him?" asked Miss Ellis, as the carriage dashed up to the curb.

Marion looked up quickly and saw a fine, manly young man just springing from the vehicle.

"That is he—that is my old friend," she exclaimed, with a merry laugh. Then she darted forward and clasped hands with Bert Jackson.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME REMINISCENCES.

"Oh, Bert, I am so delighted to see you!" she exclaimed, "but you naughty, naughty

boy, why didn't you write me you were coming?"

"What fun would that have been?" asked Bert, as he nearly shook her hand off, "but I'd have given a dollar to have seen your face when you got the flowers. Oh, I say, did you get onto the Alberto Canfield, Marion?"

"Did I? Well, I should say so, and it gave me an awful shock, Bert. Why, for a moment I thought you'd gotten so high and mighty that perhaps you wouldn't notice me."

"Um! Well, I am pretty swell, I admit," said Bert, gayly, "but my head isn't a bit bigger than it used to be. Wear the same sized hat, Marion, only a better quality. This one is a 'plug.' Do you think it's becoming?"

"You are the same old Bert," said Marion, looking around for Miss Ellis, but her companion had walked on, leaving them alone together.

"Get in, Marion, and then tell me, where shall it be? Sherry's or Del's—the Imperial or the Waldorf?"

"Oh, let's go to a quieter place than any of those, Bert," said Marion, laughing. "I want to go somewhere where we can have a quiet little chat. Just you and I alone, and we are sure to meet lots of people in all those places that you mentioned."

"Thats right," said Bert, pompously; "and I know the whole lot of them. A lot of old duffers that my esteemed pop hob-nobs with and some addlepated 'Chawlies' that I met abroad, don't you know—besides some dowagers and rosebuds that would break a man's corset strings—that is if a man had them, Marion."

"What do you mean?" asked the young girl, wonderingly. "I understand about the duffers and 'Chawlies,' but what do you mean about the others?"

They were rattling along at a pretty good pace and Bert had to raise his voice for Marion to hear him over the noise of the stones.

"Why, you see, the old ladies fill a fellow up with such guff, you know, Marion, telling him he's 'such a nice boy' and all that sort of thing, and then the rosebuds make eyes at him until he gets conceited. Oh, it's lucky I wasn't 'born to the purple,' Marion," he added, thankfully. "Why, I'd have been sucking a cane now and wearing my hair over my collar. I tell you, it runs in the blood; there is no help for it."

"Well, I am glad you are safe from that," said Marion, laughing, "but now, tell me, Bert, what are your plans for the future?"

The handsome face of the young man grew serious in a minute, but there was a little mischief still lurking in his language.

"Well, you see, I have no plans—I'm not allowed to have plans," he admitted, frankly. "If I had my way I'd marry you right off, Marion, and we'd have a home on Fifth avenue, and live happily ever after."

"But that not being possible——" interrupted Marion, laughing.

"I shall go to college instead," sighed Bert, "and I can't say I fancy the alternative."

His comical look of sorrow amused Marion greatly, but she was so deeply interested in his plans that she hardly took time to laugh at him.

"A college course is exactly what you need, Bert," she said, quickly, "and where

are you going—Princeton, Yale or Harvard?"

"Give it up—I don't know, you'll have to ask pop," said Bert, grinning, "but to college I am going—that much is settled, and, after that, I'm to go in business under my new father's name—you know he's president of a lot of things—like railroads and corporations."

"But how can you go in such a business as that?" asked Marion, staring. "What do you know of railroads or corporations?"

Bert looked at her, solemnly, but there was a twinkle in his eye.

"I know how to beat a railroad out of a fare," he said, glibly; "and, when it comes to corporations, what is there to know about them—they are simply the pockets for holding other people's money."

"I don't see what you are going to college for," laughed Marion. "You have a wonderful education already, Mr. Jackson."

"Well, there are just one or two points that I have got to learn," said Bert, meekly. "I must discover how to keep other kids from beating my railroad and learn the *modus operandi* of 'doing' other corporations. I fancy my education will be completed then and, really, it does seem a pity that I should have to go college to learn that, especially as I'm a dandy 'half-back' and a champion golfer."

"Oh, Bert, it is lucky that you don't wear corset strings," cried Marion, gayly, "you certainly would burst them with the knowledge of your attainments."

"My clothes are pretty strong," said Bert, giving himself a twist, "but, seriously, Marion, do you think I am conceited?"

He turned on her so suddenly that the young girl was a little startled. He had grown sober in a second and was staring down at her earnestly.

"I think you are just the loveliest boy in the world," she said, impulsively. "You are not conceited a bit, but you are awfully funny."

Bert still stared at her calmly for a moment after she spoke, then he replied, with unusual deliberation:

"Well, do you know what I think of you, Miss Marion Marlowe?" he asked. "Well, I think you are the prettiest girl and the most beautiful actress that I have ever seen. I just sat in that theatre to-night, way back in the rear, where I was sure you would not see me, and I had to fairly pinch myself to be sure I was awake. It seemed like a dream to think that I was Bert Jackson and that magnificent actress little Marion Marlowe."

Bert's voice had grown soft as he mentioned her name, and as Marion looked up quickly she saw tears on his lashes.

"Oh, Bert," she whispered, softly; it has seemed like a dream so often. Is it really true that this is you and me, riding in New York City, in this beautiful carriage?"

"And that the carriage is mine," broke in Bert, eagerly. "Gee! I wonder what they would say up in that old slow town where we came from."

"They would say exactly as we do, that it doesn't seem possible," said Marion, smiling. "Still, here we are, Bert, you and I and Dollie, yet scarcely a year ago we were only country children on a farm, and the strangest thing of all is, to think what may come to us in the future."

"Nothing can happen but good, now," said Bert, with a smile. "We are on the straight road to success, Marion—our troubles are over."

"I am not so sure," responded the fair girl, slowly.

As she spoke her fingers toyed softly with a cluster of flowers at her belt. They were the ones she had chosen from the offerings of her admirers.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT DELMONICO'S.

In spite of his aversion to the "old duffers" and "rosebuds," Bert took Marion to Delmonico's, and he could not help smiling with pride as he saw the glances of admiration that were bestowed upon his lovely companion. There was many an admiring glance cast upon his own handsome face as well, but Bert was far too modest to notice these; he was only too glad to see that his companion's beauty was properly appreciated.

The young girl was dressed simply in creamy white, but the gown was tasteful and rich and fitted her superb figure perfectly, while the flowers at her belt were far more becoming than the costliest jewel.

Her rich chestnut hair rippled charmingly over her white neck and forehead, and her eyes shone like stars from under the low hat brim of white tulle which was appropriately blended with a wreath of simple field daisies.

Bert bowed here and there as he led her to a table, for, just as he expected, he saw several of his foster-father's acquaintances.

Marion bowed, too, when she saw Howard Everett sitting at a table with his sister, Flo, and her husband.

"Everett looked glum when he first saw you," said Bert, softly, as they took their seats at a table. "He thought you were out with a worthy rival, but he seemed pleased when he found it was only little me! As if I couldn't grow as big as he is, Marion!"

"You are nearly as big already," said the young girl, laughing. "Still, I don't really think he looks upon you as a rival."

"That's a good joke on him, then," said Bert, very coolly; "for I'm in the field for fair, Marion, and I'd win hands down if I didn't have to go to college."

"Oh, Bert! Your audacity is splendid!" laughed Marion. "Why, it looks as if a girl was to have no say with you at all! You would just take her by storm without word or argument."

"That's the only way to get 'em, nowadays," said Bert, promptly. "The minute you begin to beg they begin to play off! Oh, I know lots about girls! I'm almost a graduate!"

"Well, there is a couple at the next table who would like to know something about you," whispered Marion, cautiously. "They've been staring at me for five minutes and they are fast growing green with envy."

Bert turned his head just enough to get a glimpse of them, and in an instant both girls craned their necks and took great pains to bow to him.

Bert bowed like a Chesterfield and smiled like a cherub. The two girls were accompanied by a chaperon, but she smiled, if anything, more sweetly than they did.

"Two of the richest girls in our set," said Bert, under his breath. "Aren't they cunning and sweet and so—so modest, Marion?"

Marion smiled a little at Bert's description. The girls were brazen and ill-bred—she could not blame him for the sarcasm.

"I fancy they haven't been well brought up," said Marion, soberly. "They look like nice girls, only they are a little foolish!"

"Well, they are a fair sample of those I have met so far," said Bert, quickly; "so is it any wonder that I still stick to you, Marion?"

"Are they rich—those girls?" asked Marion, after a minute.

"Loads of money," was the prompt response; "but Pop Canfield has more. That's where the shoe pinches. I ain't such a loon that I can't see through them, Marion."

"Then you don't think it is your handsome face and winning ways, Bert?" asked the young girl, teasingly.

"Do I look like a jibbering idiot?" asked the boy, quickly. "Well, I'd have to be that

before I could get such notions as that into my head! No, Marion; I'm not so slow! Little Bertie wants to be loved for himself alone, not for the ducats which are at present in the dim and distant future."

Marion looked at him admiringly, and just then one of his father's friends passed the table and glanced sharply at Bert's companion.

"Want's to be introduced, and I don't blame him," muttered Bert, on the sly. "Shall I present him, Marion? He's a nice old codger."

Marion nodded her head and a moment later Bert had introduced him.

Judge Graham, the "nice old codger," seated himself at their request, and began chatting pleasantly in his courtly manner.

"Whew!" exclaimed Bert, under his breath, when the Judge finally left them, "ain't he just a Jim Dandy at flattery, Marion?"

Marion's laugh rippled out, for the old gentleman's compliments had amused her.

"He certainly does do it well," she said, merrily. "Not too plain to be offensive—but just plain enough to make one feel good."

"I'd give a hundred dollars if I could do it," said Bert, honestly; "but I make a perfect muddle of it when I try to say soft things."

As soon as their dinner was over, they made their way through the dining-room and every neck was craned for a glimpse of Marion.

"I think Miss Marlowe is the prettiest girl I ever saw," said Howard Everett's sister, as she watched her. "And that Bert Jackson is a fine looking boy—they say he'll be worth a mint of money some day."

"Does that fact interest the young lady?" asked her husband, with a sly glance at Everett.

"I'm sure I don't know. Marion is absolutely unfathomable on that subject. If she has a preference for any one, not one of her best friends knows it."

"In which respect she shows great cleverness," said Howard Everett, calmly.

"Marion Marlowe does not 'wear her heart on her sleeve' for the world to gaze at."

"I did so hope that she would fall in love with you, Howard," said his sister, in a lower voice. "I just love the dear girl."

A deep flush mantled the handsome features of the critic.

"Marion does not love me and never will," he said, in a quiet voice. "I do not blame her, she is young and beautiful and can do much better."

"I'm not so sure!" said his sister, proudly. "Noble fellows like my brother don't grow on bushes! Marion may look a long while before she does any better."

She was watching Marion all the time as she spoke, but, as Bert and his companion passed out of her sight she turned and smiled sweetly at her handsome brother.

Leaning on Bert's arm, Marion had left the dining-room, little realizing the admiring comments that had been passed upon her.

As they reached the walk, Bert turned to speak to an attendant and at the same time Marion became aware that a small boy was addressing her.

"Please, miss, gimme a penny; I'm a poor orphan," said a small, squeaky voice.

The young girl glanced down and saw a dirty little hand held out to her, imploringly.

She drew a nickel from the beaded purse at her belt and pressed it into the palm; then, as she caught sight of the weazened face, an idea occurred to her.

"Here, do you want a flower?" she asked, quickly.

In an instant she had torn one of the blossoms from her belt and put it in the hand of the little beggar.

The eyes of the beggar boy glowed happily.

"I'se kin tell yer sumthin' dat yer'd orter know, miss," he whispered, shrilly; "if yer'll gimme annudder nickel, I'll post yer, loidy. I'm onter de racket, but I'll squeal if yer'll pay me!"

Marion hesitated a moment, but Bert was waiting for her now. Acting on the impulse of the moment she bent and whispered to the youngster.

"Here's your other nickel. Come and see me at the theatre if you have anything to tell me. Go to the stage door and tell the doorman that you want to see Miss Marlowe."

The boy grinned with delight and emitted a low whistle; then, as Bert handed Marion into the carriage and drove away the beggar's face took on a curious expression.

"Gee whiz! I'd orter told 'er to-night!" he whispered to himself. "Ter-morrer'll be too late; dey'll ketch 'er, sure pop, ter-morrer!"

CHAPTER IX.

DOLLIE'S SYMPATHY.

Marion and her sister Dollie sat up until nearly daylight talking over the evening's experiences, for Marion told her the whole story of her conquests at the theatre as well as of the supper at the famous restaurant.

"And to think that Bert should take you away from them all!" cried Dollie, when she heard it. "But that is just like you, sister; you are so loyal to your old friends! There is no rich lover in creation who could make you forget Bert Jackson!"

"But Bert is a rich lover himself, if all he says is true," said Marion, laughingly. "Why, will you believe it, Dollie, the boy is as fond of me as ever."

"Dear old Bert! I just long for a good talk with him," said her sister; "but I am sorry for Mr. Ray and Mr. Everett and the doctor."

"Well, why not include Mr. Merton and Mr. Gordon while you are about it?" laughed Marion; "for certainly their notes are as kind and their flowers just as sweet as the others. I believe in showing no partiality, Dollie. It is lovely to have good friends, and the more the better."

"Oh, Marion, I'm afraid you are a little bit of a coquette!" said Dollie, laughingly. "Why can't you marry as I did and 'be happy forever after'?"

"I don't know why I can't," said the fair girl, musingly; "but all of my friends are so perfectly lovely! If I marry one I lose all the others!"

"You wouldn't care if you did," said her sister, serenely. "The one you married would make up for all the rest and, of course, Marion, you can't go on having a host of lovers forever."

"I don't know why not," said Marion, sleepily; "but I guess I'll go to bed and forget all about them, Dollie, if you will only help me, please, with this abominable bandage."

Marion's arm had been behaving beautifully all the evening. It was stiff and sore, but not unbearable, and as Dollie removed the soft cloths it became perfectly comfortable.

She went to sleep at last, thinking of her many true friends, not with foolish pride that she had won their affection, but with a deep, earnest gratitude that they thought her worthy of their admiration.

The little beggar boy with his warning was entirely forgotten, as were the other trifling incidents of the evening.

When she awoke the next morning the sun was shining brightly, and Dollie was waiting for her with a steaming cup of coffee.

"Oh, this is ever so much nicer than boarding house or a hotel," were Marion's first words; "I wonder how I ever lived so long away from you, Dollie."

Her sister laughed; she was delighted to hear her say so. Marion had been away from her for some time and she had missed her very much.

Dr. Brookes was the first caller at the little flat. He came early, for he was anxious to see how Marion's arm was progressing.

"Well, Mr. Ray has started the ball rolling, all right," he said, after he had put on a fresh bandage. "That fellow has been held for trial on the charge of attempted murder, and detectives are already looking up his pedigree and habits."

"He was a wicked brute to hurt Marion!" cried Dollie, angrily. "Why, she was doing her best to make Mr. Ray stop whipping him!"

"He's a bad man, anyway, I guess," said the doctor, soberly. "I wouldn't be surprised to hear that he was a genuine crook. There is a rumor afloat even now that his friends are 'laying for' Mr. Ray and that they will leave no stone unturned to 'do' him, as they call it."

"Mercy! How awful!" cried Dollie, with a gasp.

"Has Mr. Ray been warned of this?" asked Marion, quickly.

"I saw him this morning and told him," was the doctor's answer. "I advised him to be very careful of himself at present."

"And what did he say?" asked Marion, anxiously.

"Exactly what any wise man would say," was the doctor's prompt answer; "that while he was not afraid of any fair and square man on earth, he would take every reasonable precaution to protect himself from a rascal. The friends of Dan Watson are doubtless all like himself—cowards, who will not fight except with concealed weapons, and who would very much prefer that their opponents were women."

"A dreadful class of human beings," said Marion, with a shudder, and just at that instant she remembered the beggar boy's warning.

She was about to mention it when Dollie spoke—after that she decided to say nothing about it.

"Mr. Ray is brave, but he is right to be cautious," said Dollie, eagerly. "Of course, the friends of Dan Watson will try to avenge him; those cutthroats and good-for-nothings always have their followers. Poor Marion has had enough experience with them!"

"She has, indeed!" said the doctor, as he glanced at the young girl, tenderly; "but I trust that this affair will end her adventures. To be shot, even accidentally, by one of the miscreants ought to be the climax of all such experiences."

His face was so sad as he spoke that Dollie pitied him. She knew that it grieved him to the heart to think of Marion passing through such hideous episodes.

"If she would only marry him," she thought, as she watched them, then she remembered Mr. Ray and his loyal devotion to her sister, and for a moment she almost understood Marion's inability to choose between them.

As soon as the doctor had gone Marion dressed to go out. She had promised to lunch at Sherry's with Mr. Thomas Merton.

Mr. Merton held a responsible position in a large dry goods establishment. He was a man about forty, handsome, well-to-do, independent, of an excellent salary, and, furthermore, a perfect gentleman.

Marion had met him and his sister at the hotel where she had lived, and the most delightful of friendships had sprung up between them.

Mr. Merton arrived at the flat soon after she was dressed, and the two started downtown in the most radiant spirits.

Dollie and her husband watched them

drive away, and the bride's red lips were curved in an expression of mischief.

"Mr. Merton is desperately in love with her, and she likes him tremendously. Dear me, how funny it does seem! Why, I'm just crazy with delight because one man loves me; what in the world would I do if I had a dozen admirers like Marion?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you would do, sweetheart," said her handsome young husband, as he gave her a kiss; "but I am mighty certain what I should do, Dollie; I'd put on war paint and feathers and commit wholesale slaughter!"

"There's no fear, darling," cried Dollie, laughing; "but oh, I can't help feeling sorry for all of Marion's lovers!"

CHAPTER X.

MARION'S DISAPPEARANCE.

Mr. Merton and Marion had a delightful lunch and then, at her request, her friend left her to do some shopping. Mr. Merton's face was grave when they parted, for, during the luncheon he had studied the beautiful girl and was firmly convinced that she did not love him.

With a patient sigh he had decided to wait. He would say nothing yet of his deep affection for her.

Marion made a few purchases which were to be sent to her home. Just as she left the store an old woman hobbled up to her.

"For the love of Heaven give me a penny, miss!" she whispered, hoarsely. "I'm starving to death and so are my children! Just a penny, miss, and the good Lord will reward you!"

Marion looked down at her sharply; she was disgusted with her fawning tone.

Then another thought flashed into her head—a very natural one, indeed—for she had thought of her mother.

The old creature was bent almost double and her miserable garments were tattered and dirty.

"There is no excuse for such poverty as yours, madam," she tried to say, sternly. "There are people enough who would help you, I am sure. You have no excuse for being either ragged or dirty."

"But my children," whined the woman. "I have ten of them, miss, and me a poor widow, whatever will I do? I can't work to support them."

Marion beheld her for a moment, strongly suspecting that she was a fraud, yet fearful lest the woman might be in dire need of charity. At the thought of the children, though, her heart melted.

"Heaven help the children!" was all she could say.

The old creature's eyes snapped through the lock of tangled hair that fell over them, but her voice grew even more fawning as she began an explanation.

"Where are your children?" broke in Marion, sternly. "If they are really suffering I should like to help them, but if I find you are a fraud I will have you arrested."

The old creature straightened up with astonishing alacrity, but after one quick, sharp glance at Marion she fell back into the same bent posture.

"It's a long ways, miss," she said, in her coarse, strained voice.

"Then we will take a carriage," said Marion, calmly.

The beggar's eyes flew open in earnest now and there was an expression on her face which the young girl could not fathom.

Marion replied by signaling to a cab and, putting her hand firmly on the old creature's shoulder, said:

"You must take me as straight to your children as you can go—to one of them or to the whole ten—it doesn't matter," she said.

kindly. "I want to be sure that you are truthful and worthy."

"And if I am telling the truth, what then?" asked the old woman, warily.

"Then I will help you and them," was the young girl's prompt answer.

She motioned for the woman to get into the cab as she spoke, and then stood on the curb herself until she had given the driver his instructions.

There was a gleam of exultation in the beggar's eyes as she gave Marion the address, but it could easily have been set down to an honest emotion. She shrank back on the cushions as the beautiful girl sat down beside her—it was a novel position for a miserable beggar.

A number of people had witnessed the affair and there were a good many conjectures as to the meaning of the occurrence.

"That's Miss Marlowe, the actress," said one passerby to another. "No doubt the old beggar has won her sympathy in one way or another, or maybe it's only another advertising dodge like that shooting affair yesterday."

"That was no dodge!" spoke up a youth who had overheard the remark. "I saw the whole thing, and I tell you Watson richly deserves the horsewhipping that he got from the lady's escort."

"Well, these actresses are pretty foxy, that's all I've got to say! They don't often do anything in public that isn't turned to their advantage."

"There are tricks in every trade but yours and mine, my friend," said the first gentleman addressed.

"Well, she's not tricky; she's a lady!" said the youth again. "I've heard a lot about Miss Marlowe's kind heart. She's always getting into scrapes just by being good to such people."

"Well I hope the old hag doesn't poison her with her dirt. She was a miserable looking creature!" said the first speaker, frowning.

The three walked on as the carriage rolled away, but, just at that moment a beggar boy came hurrying along, his eyes wide open, staring after the carriage.

"She's got 'er, by ginger! Skinny's got 'er!" he whispered, with a grin. "Gee whiz! It's too bad! I orter warned 'er!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE BEGGAR BOY'S NEWS.

Uptown in her little home Dollie waited for her sister Marion as the afternoon wore away, but at dinner time when she did not appear the poor girl was thoroughly frightened.

Running out to the corner drug store she telephoned to Mr. Merton, only to learn that he had left Marion directly after their luncheon.

When Ralph Moore, Dollie's husband, came home to dinner, he started out at once and hurried to the theatre.

Not a soul could be found who knew aught of Marion, but, as Ralph was going home disconsolately, he chanced to see a late edition of the evening paper. What was his astonishment to find a brief paragraph which stated that "the charming actress, Miss Marion Marlowe, was as eccentric as ever. She had been seen driving rapidly uptown in a cab with a professional beggar." Instead of going home Ralph went directly back downtown and an hour later a general alarm for Marion had been sent all over the city, accompanied by descriptions of the cab and the wretched beggar.

The theatre remained in darkness that evening, for Marion's understudy was too nervous to take her place, and every one, from the manager to the scene shifters, joined in the search for the missing favorite.

When Archie Ray heard the news he ground his teeth in anger. He was certain that the friends of Dan Watson were at the bottom of it.

"I told you they would fight a woman but not a man," he said, angrily, as he hurried first of all to Dr. Brookes' office. "That fellow is a crook and has friends in all parts of the city! Why, I have only just learned that he owns a perfect army of beggars!"

"And it is one of them that has lured poor Marion away!" was the doctor's furious answer. "I don't believe they dare hurt her, but it's outrageous that she should remain in their clutches an hour! We must do something, my friend, but what? That is the question."

"The police and every available detective at headquarters is looking for her," was the answer; "but, as you say, he must do something! It would kill me to sit idle!"

Just as they were thinking deeply Bert Jackson was announced. He was well known to both, and hasty greetings followed. Bert had just come from Dollie and his face was the color of ashes. Almost the first words he uttered were in reference to Marion.

"I've offered a reward with the boss' full consent," he said, quickly; "and now I've come to get you two to go with me. I have a clew that I believe will lead straight to Marion."

"Quick! What is it, Bert?" asked the doctor, grasping his hand.

"Come," was Bert's only answer, as he rushed from the office.

A beggar boy, tattered and torn, was waiting on the steps. Bert grabbed him by the shoulders and fairly jerked him erect before them.

"He chased me a block to tell his news. Here, tell them all you know!" he commanded, quickly. "Tell them where you think she is and why you think so!"

The boy was badly scared, but he answered promptly:

"Skinny has got' er; she's Boss Watson's best beggar! I heard one 'er his men tell her to ketch Miss Marlowe an' he sed as how he'd know w'at ter do wid her w'en she'd ketched 'er!"

"And where is she now?" broke in Bert, excitedly.

The boy grinned like a monkey, for all he was so frightened.

"She's in de cellar up by de Harlem if I'se any good at guessin'," he said, with chattering teeth. "Dat's a great place fer robbin'—dat cellar. De cellar don't tell nuthin' an' neither does de river!"

"Can you lead us there?" asked Mr. Ray, with a shudder; "or had we better get a detective?"

"Hold on! Perhaps he's only 'stringing' us," said the doctor, cautiously.

"Naw, I ain't!" retorted the boy, quickly. "It's de gospel trut'! I'se one of de boss' beggars, too, an' I knows a heap sight more'n I'm er tellin'! She gimme two nickels last night and I'd orter warned 'er, but I seen dis gent wot wuz wid her last night and when I seen him I up an' told him."

"Lead the way, then, youngster, and you get a small fortune if you find her for us!" cried Mr. Ray. "Here, call that carriage on the corner and give the man the direction!"

The boy darted off to call the carriage with the three young men in hot pursuit of him.

"Don't lose him, Bert!" called the doctor, who had been obliged to stop and lock the door.

"He can't lose me; I'm a sprinter!" was Bert's answer. "Let him try to bolt and I'll come down on him like a cyclone!"

"Bert, hadn't we better notify the police of our clew?" called the doctor again.

"Done it already! I telephoned from the corner!" was Bert's ready answer. "If there's anything in it they are there already!"

The carriage was secured and the three young men piled into it, taking the boy with them so that he should not escape them.

"Now, go on and tell us all you know," said Mr. Ray, as he poured a handful of silver into the urchin's pocket.

The beggar's eyes nearly popped out of his head. It was the first time in his life that he had ever seen so much money in his own possession.

"Wot d'ye want ter know first?" he asked, with alacrity. "I kin tell yer anything from Watson ter de cellar!"

"Tell us about Watson. Who is he?" was the first eager question.

"He's de king of de beggars," was the boy's prompt reply. "He owns a lot on us an' makes us steal an' beg ter serport him. W'en dis here gent licked him yesterday he tried ter wing him, but he hit de loidy inste'd an' he's mighty sore dis mornin'."

He pointed to Mr. Ray, whom he seemed to have recognized at once, although he had not said a word of having been present at the shooting.

"That explains where Watson gets the money that he spends at the clubs," said Mr. Ray; "now about this cellar, just what and where is it?"

The boy's keen eyes took on a cunning expression. He could not answer this question as accurately as he would like, but he knew he must not admit his ignorance until he was sure they would not take back his precious money.

"Oh, it's de sullar of an old tumble down warehouse on de river," he said, glibly. "De crooks an' river t'ieves has dug a lot er tunnels t'ro it, so dey kin skin out wid der stuff w'en de cops gits after 'em!"

"And is this where Watson's beggars hang out?" asked Bert, quickly; "and what reason have you got for thinking that Miss Marlowe has been taken there?"

The boy looked up with a beaming smile, for here was a question that he knew he could answer.

"Skinny lives dere," he said, tersely; "she's de crookedest kind of er beggar, Skinny is, dat's w'y she wuz chose fer nabbin' de actress!"

"Hurry, driver!" shouted Bert; "and go straight to the river! We'll double your pay, so don't spare your horses!"

"He can't go very near de sullar," said the boy, grinning. "Youse'll have ter leave de kerridge er block away, den dere comes de scrabble fer ter find de right sullar!"

"We'll find it if it is there!" said Bert, eyeing him suspiciously; "but Heaven help you, kid, if you really have been 'stringing' us!"

CHAPTER XIII.

IN AWFUL PERIL.

During all this time poor Marion had been passing through a fearful experience, for she had indeed fallen into the hands of "Watson's beggars," and a more vicious lot of criminals could hardly have been found in the big city. When the beggar woman mentioned the address of her home Marion recognized it as being near the bank of the Harlem River, but she knew nothing whatever of that particular locality.

It was uptown, at any rate, and could not be so very far from Dollie's flat, so she decided that there was time to investigate the woman's story and then get back home in plenty of time for dinner.

But, as they neared the neighborhood in which the woman lived, she could not help growing a little nervous.

There were a lot of old tumbling down tenements or "rookeries" built out to the very river bank, and the only way to get around them was by following narrow streets and crooked alleys.

They left the carriage at the entrance to

one of the squalid tenements and almost with her heart in her mouth Marion followed the woman.

Such a picture of misery as she saw on every side! The halls of the wretched hovel fairly swarmed with evil-faced children, while guilty-eyed men and women slunk in the doorways and stared at her curiously.

She was surrounded by perhaps the lowest forms of human beings to be found in the big city, yet the young girl was already beginning to feel less fear for herself and more sympathy and compassion for these wretched creatures.

The old creature led her into a dingy room on the third floor of the building. It was low and dark and positively reeking with vile odors.

"But where are your children, madam?" asked Marion, as she glanced sharply around the nearly empty room; "I have come to help them and you told me I should see them."

The only answer was a harsh, dry laugh from the woman.

Then the hideous creature straightened her bent form with amazing alacrity, throwing off her dilapidated bonnet and deftly removing the wig of rusty gray hair.

In her changed appearance she looked a vicious fiend and already she seemed gloating over her helpless victim.

"Yer made it aisy fer me, miss," she said, with a sneer. "A ride in er cab is er luxury fer a beggar! Ha! ha! I didn't look fer no sich cinch as dat, but, now we've got here, yer'll please give up dem rings and wot money and val'ables yer happen to have erbout ye!"

Marion's blood seemed to freeze as she heard the words. For a moment she could only stare helplessly at the creature.

"If ye screams it'll be ther wuss fer ye!" cautioned the old hag, shrilly.

She was glaring at Marion like a panther now, and, as she glared, she worked her long clawlike fingers together in a way that chilled the very marrow of the poor girl's bones.

"How dare you, madam!" she managed to say at last. "Stand aside and let me out! You are a wicked woman! If you dare to lay a hand on me I'll not answer for the consequences!"

She started for the door, keeping her eye on the woman as she went. She felt instinctively that it would not do to turn her back on her. Suddenly the hideous old creature sprang at her like a cat. She had no idea of letting her prey escape her.

Marion felt the long, skinny fingers encircling her neck; then, with one stroke of her arm, she sent the vicious creature reeling into a corner.

The next moment she had darted out of the door and was speeding through the hallway. There was only one thought in her mind and that was to escape from the building.

She cleared the first flight of stairs at almost a bound and darting through the lower halls, was soon, as she supposed, at the bottom of the last flight.

What was her dismay to find only a solid wall. She was in a sort of passageway, but the outer door had vanished. She had lost her way in her mad flight for freedom! There was nothing to do but retrace her steps and search for the exit.

Before she could make the first step she was surrounded by a group of the inmates of the building, blear-eyed, low-browed men and women, who seemed to spring up from the very floor of the passage.

Marion gave a shriek for assistance and then stood at bay. She had decided instantly to fight for her life and repay with interest any act of violence.

Just one breathless moment passed and the whole pack was upon her. In spite of her

strong, young muscles she was soon helpless in their clutches.

The next thing she knew she was being carried bodily down through a clumsy trap-door into what seemed to her to be a cavernous cellar.

As her captors carried her along through this hideous place it grew gradually darker and more loathsome, and finally she could hear the sound of rushing water in the distance.

What place could it be and what were they going to do? The young girl racked her almost paralyzed brain in an effort to anticipate the fate in store for her.

Suddenly it occurred to her that they must be at the very river's edge and that the sound of rushing water must be from one of the city's sewers which she had heard emptied into the river in this locality.

The situation was horrible, but she did not utter a sound. There were fully half a dozen of the wretches half dragging and half carrying her.

On, on, they went until all was pitchy blackness and the men who carried her had to almost creep along through the thick, slippery mud of the cellar. Vile odors greeted her and occasionally the men carrying her would utter a fearful curse and kick out with their feet as if rats or kindred creatures had threatened to attack them.

It was plain that her captors knew their way perfectly, for, in spite of the inky darkness and the many obstacles in their path, they went forward steadily.

There was not a word spoken that she could understand, although they were shouting constantly at each other in some unintelligible language.

At last she was set down in the mud and slime of the place and the darkness still impenetrable and the sound of rushing water still coming to her faintly.

The next instant Marion's heart almost stopped beating, for, without releasing the hold which they had kept upon her wrists, these human monsters set about to rob her of her jewelry.

A hideous spasm of terror rendered her helpless for an instant; then, as she felt their heavy hands fairly tearing at her dress, she gave a shriek that awoke the dim echoes as they had perhaps never been awakened before.

With a mighty effort she tore herself from their grasp and bounded forward, but there was no escape. They were six to one and they were desperate creature.

A lightning like prayer for assistance sprang to her white lips, but it died away as it came—the situation looked hopeless.

She made a desperate attempt to run, but a dozen steps in the darkness and a new danger confronted her.

Suppose she should fall in this hideous place? She might pitch headlong down into some hole from which she could never get out.

With limbs benumbed with terror she stood and waited. Her brain was in a turmoil—she could not think or act wisely.

As she awaited their next onslaught a strange thing occurred. They fell to fighting among themselves like so many tigers.

In the almost total darkness their forms looked like black shadows, but their eyes glittered like those of maddened brutes and they fairly growled with rage as they struck and clawed at each other.

Marion crouched close to the ground and strained her eyes. She knew it would soon be over and then her moments were numbered.

The sound of the water was almost obscured by their curses, but when it did come to her ears, it was a calm, restful sound like that of a deep stream lapping the walls of her prison.

If there was only an opening by which she could reach the river! The thought came swiftly to the poor girl and stirred her pulses with fresh courage.

Not once did she shrink from this horrible alternative. Death even in the dark river under a decaying wharf would be preferable to the fiendish treatment which she knew awaited her at the hands of these wretches.

She began creeping cautiously along, guided by the sound of the water, while, to her great delight, the fight waxed hotter and hotter.

It was a fight to the death, for each of the hideous creatures was half crazed with drink and each was determined to wrest the spoils from the other.

No thought of law or punishment need stay their hands, for, as the beggar boy said, "the cellar told no secrets."

Few victims came easily to their fearful den, what wonder then that they should battle like vultures over the tempting morsel that had fairly dropped among them.

As they fought in the darkness they gave no thought to their victim. She was between them and the river; there was no escape for her.

Suddenly a yell announced the victory decided. Some one had won that bloody battle in the darkness and solitude of the cellar, but it mattered nothing to Marion who had been victorious.

She could see a ray of light now and knew that she was nearing the river. She redoubled her speed, half rising, but moving cautiously.

As soon as she reached the light her captors would see her, then—then she would flee like a deer and seek safety in the river.

A perfect volley of unintelligible oaths showed her that they were after her. There was no time to lose. She rose and darted swiftly toward the opening which she supposed meant death for her but defeat for her captors.

A broad shaft of light almost blinded her as she reached the opening, which seemed only a jagged hole in a wall of rotten timbers.

A silver sheen of water stretched before her in the distance, but between her and the moonlit stream yawned a black, silent space It was the water under the rotten wharf, but there was no sign of a sewer opening.

Without an instant's delay the young girl darted on.

There was a yell of rage from her baffled captors as she sprang fearlessly into the dark water.

CHAPTER XIV.

A RESCUE AT THE LAST MINUTE.

The detectives from headquarters had done their best and so had the police force in its search for Marion.

The beggar boy's information had been accepted by them all and every effort had been made to track the old woman whom he called "Skinny."

Finally two men and women who had seen Marion in the carriage with the old creature communicated their knowledge to the authorities, with the result that the cabman was found who had driven her to the tenement.

Then followed activity such as was seldom seen in the department.

Before morning every old rookery in that particular section was thoroughly searched or raided.

The friends of the beautiful girl offered every inducement in their power, and the three young men, with the beggar boy still acting as escort, were foremost among the searchers through the squalid rookeries.

But it remained for the river police to rescue Marion.

While she was choosing between the river

and her captors, they were waiting silently in the vicinity of the old dock, which they had known for a long time harbored some curious creatures.

The cellar of an old dilapidated warehouse communicated with the rotten wharf and to connect other subterranean passages they knew was within the bounds of possibility.

More than one thief had escaped by some such underground passage, and to-night they were watching for exactly such an occurrence.

When they heard Marion's body strike the water they felt sure it was their "quarry," and, as quickly as possible, a small boat ran under the low wharf and "lay to" where the ripples were still circling outward.

"My God! It's a woman!" the officer in the bow called out, hoarsely, as the girl rose to the surface and tried to strike out feebly. "Quick! Back her a bit till I catch her clothing!"

The next second he leaned forward and grasped Marion's shoulder. She was sinking for the third time and was almost unconscious.

At daylight the rescued girl was still lying on board of the police patrol boat, white as death, but smiling bravely.

They had worked over her all night, not daring to take her ashore until she had recuperated sufficiently to endure the moving.

Such a story as she told them made even these veteran officers shudder, but they swore mighty oaths of vengeance on the ruffians who had so nearly murdered her.

No news had ever startled the great city as did this news of Marion's discovery as it was told in that day's evening papers.

It came like a thunderbolt upon peaceful homes, because of its ominous warning to the helpless and innocent.

Marion was blamed by many for her interest in the vicious old woman, but few eyes remained tearless when they read the details of her awful experience, for only by a wonderful stroke of fate had a dastardly crime been prevented.

Marion was safe with Dollie before Bert and his companions heard the good news, but there was no less rejoicing because they had not been the ones to rescue her.

"We must not tire her with our delight," Dr. Brookes said, wisely, when they all met at Dollie's to see for themselves that it was really Marion.

"Poor girl! She will be ill a long time from the shock, I fear, but, while she is convalescing there is work for us to do. We must leave no stone unturned to punish those wretches!"

"It will go hard with Watson and that beggar woman they call 'Skinny'!" Mr. Ray said, savagely. "Watson has lived on the princely revenue from this awful business for years. It was a private communication from him, sent, nobody knows how, to one of his beggars, that brought all this fearful thing upon poor Marion."

"A fiendish revenge for a horsewhipping," said Ralph Moore, as they all went out, leaving Marion alone with her sister.

"He knew he could not hurt me worse," was Mr. Ray's low answer; "but, of course, he only meant for that old hag to rob her—he had no idea that the poor girl would fall so completely into the hands of wretches."

"Yet he laughed over the account of her disappearance!" cried Bert Jackson, hotly. "I was at the jail last night before we started and they told me he fairly roared when he saw the evening papers."

"He can roar again in his cage in Sing Sing," said Mr. Ray, grimly. "He'll go up for ten years at least, and so will 'Skinny' and several of the others."

It was nearly a week before Marion recovered, but the theatre was open every

night after she was found and her place was creditably filled by her "understudy."

When she did finally reappear before the footlights the burst of delighted applause brought the tears to her eyes. Her friends could not have given her a more cordial welcome.

Arrest after arrest followed the telling of Marion's story. The Board of Health followed the Police Board to the crumbling rookeries and soon every trace of "Watson's beggars," as an organized gang, was wiped out of the city.

Evidence was piled up against Watson that sent him to prison for life, instead of the ten years which Mr. Ray had predicted.

The beggar boy alone of all the gang escaped, for it was proved that he was an innocent victim of the others.

A home was found for him and Bert's offered reward was turned over to him, while Marion's other friends remembered the river police generously.

THE END.

At this point in her career Marion Marlowe was about to enter on a new experience which was to give her a glimpse into that charmed circle known as society. Her manner of joining, for a time, the exclusive set, some of the people she meets and the jealousies she unconsciously arouses in the hearts of her new girl acquaintances, will be detailed in a most interesting manner in the next number of "My Queen" (No. 12). The story will be entitled, "Marion Marlowe in Society; or, a Race for a Title." In this story Marion achieves new triumphs through her grace and open-heartedness. Incidentally, the story will contain a faithful portrayal of modern society life.

PATTERN COLUMN.

By special arrangements with the manufacturers we are enabled to supply the readers of MY QUEEN with the patterns of all garments described or illustrated in this column at TEN CENTS each. Address, "Pattern Column," MY QUEEN, 233 William Street, New York City.

☞ *In ordering patterns be sure to give size and number.*

No. 2341—LADY'S WAIST.

This model is especially designed for women who are somewhat inclined to stoutness. The extra under-arm gore and the special shaping of the pieces make it a very becoming style. All the seams are carefully arranged, with the view of apparently diminishing the size of the waist. The gathered outer front may be omitted and the lining covered smoothly for a plain waist, if preferred. The front of the waist extends a little below the waist line, giving it a long-waisted effect. Any dress material could be used for developing the model, and with judicious trimming it can be made into a dressy waist. The pattern is cut in sizes 38 to 46 inches bust measure. Size 38 requires 1 3-4 yards of 42-inch material.

No. 2352—LADY'S WAIST.

Garnet taffeta is just the thing for developing this model. The tucking for the chemisette could be of the same material and color, with white for the revers-collar. The neck of the waist is cut low in front and gathered into a small space at the center. The lower edge is also arranged in gathers both front and back, and again about three inches above, where it is tacked to the lining to hold it under the broad wrinkled belt. This allows it to be slightly pouched over the belt. Silk or wool fabrics that are not too heavy would develop the mode well. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 40 inches bust measure. The medium size requires 3 1-2 yards of 32-inch material.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, has become well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps. STREET & SMITH.

"I am a young girl of sixteen, and called very beautiful. I have black hair and black eyes. I am in love with a young actor, who is very handsome, but poor. I love him dearly, but my parents object to us going together. Would you kindly advise me what to do? SYBOL I. H."

As you are entirely too young to judge for yourself, we should certainly advise you to take the advise of your parents. It is seldom that an actor makes a good husband, and his method of earning a living is usually very precarious. As you grow older you will be very glad that you have as wise parents as you have. We trust that they will be able to talk you out of your present infatuation and show you how foolish you are to rebel against their judgment.

"Would you kindly advise me with your good advice? I am a young girl of fifteen and quite attractive. I have blue eyes, golden hair, rosy cheeks, and a loving disposition. I am neither rich nor poor, but I am desperately in love with a young gentleman. He loves me dearly, but is very poor. My parents object because they think he cannot support two. Would you kindly advise me whether I should marry this man or not?

"LU ELLA M. E."

We are very sorry indeed for children of your age when they imagine themselves in love. It is like measles and whooping cough, that passion of yours, Lu Ella! Nearly all of us had it when we were about your age. Now take my advice, little girl, and get over it just as quickly as you can. You will see scores of men, if you live long enough, whom you will love far better than you love this young man now. You may not believe it, but it is absolutely true. Ask any man or woman that you know and see what they tell you.

"I am only eighteen and have been married two years, and although my husband is a good provider, I never want for anything. Of late I have noticed a waning of his affection for me. I assure you that I feel very bad about it. What shall I do to regain his affection? F. A. T."

Your complaint comes to us in company with several of similar nature. We can only say to young wives, be as patient as you can. Try to study your husband's nature and to make him happy. It is possible that what you take to be waning love is merely caused by business cares and worry. Pay no attention to it, but go right on being just as sweet and kind as you can, and some day, we are sure, you will be rewarded by a return of his affection.

"I have read with great pleasure your new publication, 'My Queen,' and wish to say that it is the best five cent weekly I have ever had the privilege of reading. I have read a great number of five cent weeklies, but 'My Queen' excels them all, with Marion Marlowe as a subject. I will, with great pleasure, continue to read every issue.

"F. G. BULLOCK."

Many thanks for your kind words. We feel sure you will find the succeeding numbers of 'My Queen' more interesting than ever as the stories of Marion Marlowe's career appear.

"You, no doubt, are very busy with your correspondence, but I think you rather enjoy your task of giving advice to others; hence my letter to you. I am a young man of twenty-four and a more unfortunate one in regard to sweethearts you never saw. I am sorry to confess I have had about a dozen sweethearts, all of whom have broken with me, or I with them.

"One I broke with because she announced her determination to change from a Protestant to a Catholic, and as I am not in favor of mixing religion, we fell out. Now, of all the girls I have gone with during the time we kept company, I always felt satisfied that I loved that girl, but if we fell out, the feeling seemed gone, and I barely ever thought of her. In my own mind I think there is no such thing as true love in my whole make-up, for every girl I have ever gone with I seemed to think I loved, and if we parted company, then the doubt has come up. Now let me tell you, at an early age I went into the United States Navy and was naturally thrown in the company of plenty of girls and young ladies. Do you think that having been thrown in with so many has spoiled me, or taken away all hopes of a good, true feeling of love settling in my heart. And another thing, I am very short in height and have kept company the last few weeks with a lady some two or three inches taller than I am. Would that look entirely out of place, or doesn't it make any difference?

"What would you advise me to do, and do you think there is any such thing as true love in me?
"JASPER."

We admire the candor of your letter, Jasper. No, we do not think you incapable of true love. It is merely that your character is undeveloped at present. Why not cease giving so much time and thought to the subject of sweethearts and employ your mind with other matters? As the years go by you will learn what you most require in a wife, and when a girl that just "fills the bill" crosses your path, you will no doubt love her truly and make her a good husband. We do not think the question of stature makes any difference, as a rule, in matters of the heart.

"Would you kindly give me a few words of advice. I am a girl of sixteen, and this is my second year in the high school. My class has made up a whist club, and my father does not wish me to attend, for my father says I am too young, and it brings me home too late. Now, will you please tell me if you think my father is right? Am I to stay at home year in and year out without any pleasures? FANNY B."

By the tone of your letter we should judge that you were very angry, Fannie? Now which do you suppose knows best what is for your good, yourself or your father? We judge by the spelling, punctuation and capitals in your letter that your father sees a better way for you to spend your evenings than in playing whist. An occasional evening of pleasure may do you no harm, but you are entirely too young to set your opinion against your father's. You have time enough for whist after you have finished your education, which in spite of your second year at high school, has been sadly neglected. We were obliged to make several corrections in your letter before we handed it to the printer.

"You find time to answer some letters from men, so I hope you won't fail to answer mine. I am deeply in love with a beautiful girl who is only fifteen years old. I am twenty-seven, and have a good position, and am able to support a wife. Would it be right for me to ask this girl to marry me considering her age? Of course, I would speak to her parents first, as I realize that she is very young for such a step. I would like a word of advice from you, though, if it is not too much to ask. ALBERT W. F."

We answer all our correspondents promptly, and if you or any of our numerous readers find that there is any delay in the publication of their letters it is due to the fact that the letters must be in hand some time prior to the date of publication, and not because these interesting epistles are in any way neglected. Our readers will understand that in the publication of such a large edition as "My Queen" requires, a great deal of time is necessarily consumed in the mere printing and handling of the copies, despite the enormous resources of the publishers. For this reason it is absolutely necessary that ample time be given the editor to prepare the material for the printer's hands.

We are quite as glad to hear from our men readers as from those of the gentler sex, especially when they write such manly letters as you have.

The man who marries a fifteen-year-old girl takes a great responsibility upon his shoulders. Her character is unformed, her nature is undeveloped, and her future is problematical. Her husband must be husband, father and lover, all at once. We think your idea of talking the matter over with her parents first is a very wise one. We would also suggest that you keep on friendly terms with this very young girl for at least a year or two, and allow her character to develop of itself.

"As you have answered a good many letters in 'My Queen,' I write you this letter. I am a girl of seventeen and am very much in love with a young man who has a trade and can make a living, but my parents want me to marry another man who calls at the house to see my father, as he says. I like this fellow, but only as a friend. The first fellow does not want to be engaged for about two years, while the fellow that my parents like would get engaged at once. I ask your advice because if I ask my parents they will say I should marry the fellow that I would not like for a husband. I. B."

We are of the opinion that the man your parents have selected is the more desirable of the two, but we cannot understand their hurry to marry you off. Few parents care to lose their daughters so early, and surely you should be kept in school for some years longer. Why not drop all thought of marriage for a time? If these two men love you they will both be willing to wait, and perhaps in another year you will see things differently.

"I am seventeen years old and I think I am in love. There is a young man who lives on our block who has showed me marked attention, and I do think that he is a great deal nicer than any man I ever met. He has not said that he loves me, but I am sure he does, and that he only needs a good chance to declare his passion. How can I convince him that I am willing to listen to him, as he is very bashful? KITTIE H."

If the young man has shown you "marked attention" we would advise that you let him keep on showing it for a time, at least. You are too young to think of such serious matter as proposals and marriages. Have all the fun you wish with the boys, but leave anything else to your older sisters or companions. You have not had the opportunity to meet many men yet, and it is possible that in the course of the next few years you may find one who is even nicer than your present ideal. Do not be in haste to form a serious affection for any man. They will come soon enough.

"I am a girl of sixteen years of age and have dark chestnut hair and large blue eyes and have

a great many admirers. One is very jealous of me. I want your advice. What would you do, go with him or not? All of the fellows want to go with me. I have plenty of money and dress swell. There is one whom I think is swell, and I would like to go with him, but he doesn't seem to care for me. Please advise me.

"BEATRICE R."

You will see, Beatrice, that we have corrected your letter, as it was poorly punctuated. We are sorry to hurt your feelings, but cannot help judging from your letter that you are inclined to be a little vain and very foolish. If you could only see how much more sensible you would be if you would use some of the money which you are spending on "swell clothes" to educate yourself and develop your talents. Perhaps it is because you have "plenty of money" that the boys all like you! At any rate, you are entirely too young to have so many beaux, and you will surely "come to grief" if some one does not take care of you. Have you no mother or father, no one to warn you of the dangers which lie in your path? Write to us again, as we are extremely anxious about you.

"I am a girl of sixteen years. I have auburn hair and large brown eyes and many admirers, some of whom are very jealous. I want your advice.

"Would you go with a jealous man or not? I have lots of money and dress up to date. There is one fellow who is swell and would like to go with me, but he doesn't care to go steady, but he has been with me once or twice. He is very nice company so far. I would like to have your advice.

VIOLET W."

We judge by your letter that you must be the twin sister of Beatrice R., and advise you to read our letter to her. Perhaps if you stop "going" with these numerous fellows and sit down and ponder for a while, you will see what an extremely silly little girl you are. If you ever wish to be a woman of intelligence, one who is worthy of the respect of others, you must get something into your mind besides "swell" clothes and fellows.

"Please let me have your advice in my trouble. I am fortunate enough to have three young men friends who are paying me attention. I like them all, but I do not really love any of them. They all want me to marry them, but I have avoided giving any one of them a definite answer, because I enjoyed their companionship and did not want to lose it or hurt their feelings. What ought a girl do in such a position? I do not want to injure any one of them, but I do enjoy going out, and I would hate to lose the acquaintance of any of the three.

DORA F. I."

The girl who can successfully manage three beaux at the same time must have her hands full. We would advise you to tell each one of these young men that your intentions are not serious, even if his are, and that you do not want him to entertain any hope in your direction. Be frank and kindly and convince them that you are trying to avoid hurting them by being candid now before they have become more deeply interested. If you explain to them that you do this because you are still heartwhole and that you value their friendship, but wish to avoid their wasting their affection where it is not returned, you will turn your three lovers into three steadfast friends. Do not play with their affection any longer—be true to your innate womanliness and you will be much happier.

"Two years ago I married a man whom I respected deeply, but did not truly love. Now I have learned to love him, but at the same time he seems to have tired of me. He spends almost all his time with his books, and as his education is much better than mine, I am unable to interest him or to share in his pursuits. I am said to be a very pretty woman, but he seems to have tired of my beauty, although I can remember when he thought of nothing else. Can you tell me how I can win back his affection, which I am now anxious to have?

MRS. GRACIE K."

Your experience is certainly a very sad one, but do not despair, for there may be a way to change the condition of affairs. If you have the time and means at your disposal, we would advise you to cultivate yourself up to your husband's level. Mere beauty will never hold a man's interest for a lifetime. If you could study music or painting, or whatever you may have a natural bent for, and some day surprise your husband with your achievements, you would probably instantly win his admiration, and his regard would soon follow. Be just as cheerful and companionable as you possibly can at all times. Make yourself indispensible in the thousand little ways that present themselves to women, and he will learn to value you more than he does his books. A library is not a very formidable opponent, and it is certainly one that will cause you no pangs of jealousy.

"If there is really a boy like Bert Jackson, won't you please let me know his address? I have simply fallen in love with him, and I want to marry him before any other girl gets a chance. I like the rest of the men all right, but Bert is my favorite.

LIZZIE J."

We agree with you that Bert is a very fine young man, but it would not be fair to the other girls if we gave you his address and gave them no chance. Bert is bashful, although you might not suspect it, and if all the readers of "My Queen" made love to him at once we are inclined to think that he would hide from you as effectually as he did from "Matt Jenkins."

"I am afraid I am a very wicked girl, and as I cannot ask any one else for advice, I must come to you, dear Miss Shirley. I have been engaged for a year and a half to a real good fellow who thinks a great deal of me. Last summer I met a man who interested me greatly, and I am afraid I really loved him at the time. Anyway, I became engaged to him, and since we parted at the seashore I have corresponded with him regularly. Now he writes me that he is coming here to

spend a couple of weeks, and I know that I will be in serious trouble. I think I value the old lover the most, but the new one fascinates me very much, and I really do not know how to choose between them. Please advise me what to do. LOUISE B."

You certainly did very wrong to become engaged to one man when you were at the time bound to another. We do not believe that you care enough for either of these men to make them a good wife, and would advise you to break both engagements without delay. When you come across the man whom you love enough to marry him there will be no chance of any other man interesting you. That is the only sort of love upon which to build a happy married life, and you are doing any man a grievous wrong to marry him if you have any less firm affection. Probably you do not know yet what true love is —when you do experience it you will realize the difference between that and "fascination."

"After an engagement of two years I am as far from being married as I was at first. My betrothed is quite attentive to me, but he says nothing whatever about getting married. He has a good position, and there is no reason that I know of why we should not be married at once. I am nineteen years old, and I do not want to spend all my youth in waiting. How shall I manage things to hurry him up? AMANDA D. S."

Your lover seems to be willing enough to enjoy your society, but not anxious to assume responsibility. We would advise you to talk the matter over with him calmly and frankly. Tell him that you are desirous that he fulfill his promise and make you his wife. If he gives you no satisfactory answer and still delays we would advise you to try the effect of a little indifference. Be out once in a while when he calls, and accept invitations from other men a little. If this does not make your betrothed anxious to wed you, then you may be sure that his love has cooled and you would have good reason for calling the engagement off if you wish to do so. You are quite young, and we would not advise you to enter into another engagement hurriedly. See something of the world before you tie yourself down to the trials and responsibilities of wedded life.

"You will be willing, I am sure, to help a man in his trouble even if the most of your correspondents are women. For some time I have paid attention to a young lady, and while she has certainly treated me nicely, and seems to appreciate the little courtesies I have shown her, it is impossible for me to detect any signs that she is interested in me. She always seems happy in my society, but I notice she is just as happy when she is out with some one else. How can I win her attention and interest? FRANK S."

Perhaps the young lady does not realize that your attentions are serious, but only thinks that you are an unusually courteous and attentive gentleman. If she treats you so nicely and shows no signs of having a greater interest in other men, you certainly have as good a chance to win her affection as any one else. Perhaps you are too uniformly devoted. A little indifference now and then might not be a bad idea. Women, and men, too, for that matter, always desire most what is farthest from their reach. If the young lady saw you paying a little attention to some one else, it might rouse her interest. We would advise you, anyway, not to break your heart over any woman who does not desire your devotion. Save your attentions and your affection for one who will value and appreciate them.

"I am a working girl and am busy in the store until six o'clock or after. I have but little time to myself and none at all for pleasure, for when I get home they expect me to wash the dishes and take care of the baby, and sew and mend clothes for the whole family. It seems to me that I ought to be allowed some time to myself. Don't you think it is mean for them to keep me so tied down? ROSIE G. G."

If you are paying your board or contributing in any way to the support of the household there is no reason why you should be expected to do anything more. A woman or girl who works is certainly entitled to the right to spend her leisure hours in the way that suits her best. We do not say that you should be an absolutely helpless member of the family, but there is no reason why you should allow yourself to be imposed upon by your own family any more than by any one else.

"Married women have their troubles as well as single ones, and perhaps you will not be averse to helping me with mine. I think the world of my husband, but I find it very hard work to control my temper. He has not been in active business for two months. The first week or so I enjoyed having him around all the time, but lately I am sorry to say, his continual presence has really annoyed me. I do not think that he is at all different from what he used to be, but, somehow, I seem to see too much of him, and yet I am almost ashamed to admit that even to myself. I can't understand my feelings at all. Can you help me out? MRS. V. C."

We have observed that there is usually greater harmony in a household when a husband's duties necessitate his remaining away for several hours of each day. Distance injures love less than nearness, and people are more polite when they do not see too much of each other.

Perhaps your husband would find that he could spend some time each day very pleasantly among his friends or in athletic sports if you suggested it, and when he returned home at night you would be glad to see him and compare notes upon the events of the day.

There is no poison so deadly in its effects upon the affections as *ennui*, and a wise woman will avoid it discreetly and persistently.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup
Has been used for over FIFTY YEARS by MILLIONS of MOTHERS for their CHILDREN WHILE TEETHING with PERFECT SUCCESS. It SOOTHES the CHILD, SOFTENS the GUMS, ALLAYS all PAIN; CURES WIND COLIC, and is the best remedy for DIARRHŒA. Sold by Druggists in every part of the world. Be sure and ask for "Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup," and take no other kind. Twenty-five cents a bottle.

"Marion Marlowe is just splendid, and I am sure that Miss Shirley must be just like her. I do wish that I lived in New York for then I would try to see her, for I'm sure she is lovely.

"Please answer a question for me. Ought a girl to accept a man's attention when she has no affection for him, and does not expect to marry him? CARRIE V. S."

We are glad you like Marion so much and appreciate your compliments regarding the editor. If the man you mention is showing you attention with the idea of marrying you it is certainly unwise for you to accept it. If it is simply the attention that one friend may show to another and there is nothing serious in his intentions we see no reason why you should not enjoy his society. All the pleasure that there is in life is made by good friends. Try not to give either your friends or yourself any cause for regret.

"Two young men have honored me with their attentions, and I am very happy when I am with either one of them. Please let me know if you think my being so happy when they are with me is a sign that I am in love. JANE A. W."

We think you are over-anxious to be in love. Your being happy when you have the pleasure of other people's society is no sign that you are a victim of the tender passion. Do not be in such haste to be in love or to wonder whether you are. You will know it soon enough when you really experience it.

CATALOGUE OF ISSUES TO DATE.

1—From Farm to Fortune; or, Only a Farmer's Daughter.

2—Marion Marlowe's Courage; or, A Brave Girl's Struggle for Life and Honor.

3—Marion Marlowe's True Heart; or, How a Daughter Forgave.

4—Marion Marlowe's Noble Work; or, The Tragedy at the Hospital.

5—Marion Marlowe Entrapped; or, The Victim of Professional Jealousy.

6—Marion Marlowe's Peril; or, A Mystery Unveiled.

7—Marion Marlowe's Money; or, Brave Work in the Slums.

8—Marion Marlowe's Cleverness, or, Exposing a Bold Fraud.

9—Marion Marlowe's Skill; or, A Week as a Private Detective.

10—Marion Marlowe's Triumph; or, In Spite of Her Enemies.

11—Marion Marlowe's Disappearance, or, Almost a Crime.

Back numbers always on hand. If you cannot get our publications from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

25,000 Trial Packages FREE!

Rheumatism Cured by a Simple Remedy that you may Try without spending a cent—Cured many cases of 30 and 40 years standing.

JOHN A. SMITH.

If you have Rheumatism, write to me and I will send you free of cost a trial package of a harmless remedy, which cured me and thousands of others, among them cases of over 50 years standing. It is a grand remedy, and in order that every suffering reader may learn about it, I will gladly send them a Trial Package free, even if more than 25,000 invalids should apply. Many a distressing case of rheumatism, among them some which defied Hospital Drugs, Electricity and medical skill, were successfully cured. In Denham, Ind., it cured a lady, who then cured 17 of her neighbors. In Prosser, Neb., it cured Mrs. ——Morritz who had been afflicted 12 years. In Fountain City, Wis., it cured Hon. Jacob Sexauer, after suffering for 30 years, no wonder having employed seven physicians. At 116 Oak St., Vincennes, Ind., this remedy rescued Miss Emma Callender from a case of Rheumatism which her physicians considered fatal. Rev. C. Sund, of Harrisville, Wis., testifies that this remedy cured two members of his congregation, one who had suffered 18, the other 25 years. Thousands of similar cases could be mentioned where this wonderful remedy has been completely cured. Write at once for a free trial package and other information, for it is an honest remedy that you can test before you part with your money. Address, John A. Smith, 98 German Block, Milwaukee, Wis.

MORPHINE

Easy Home Cure. Painless. Permanent.

We will send anyone addicted to Opium, Morphine, Laudanum, or other drug habit a Trial Treatment, Free of Charge, of the most remarkable remedy ever discovered. Contains Great Vital Principle heretofore unknown. Refractory Cases solicited. Confidential correspondence invited from all, especially Physicians. ST. JAMES SOCIETY, 1181 BROADWAY NEW YORK.

Lydia E. Pinkham's

Vegetable Compound Cures Painful, Profuse, and Irregular Periods.

MRS. E. F. CUSTER, Brule, Wis., writes:

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—Your Vegetable Compound has been of much benefit to me. When my menses first appeared they were very irregular. They occurred too often and did not leave for a week or more. I always suffered at these times with terrible pains in my back and abdomen. Would be in bed for several days and would not be exactly rational at times. I took Lydia E Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and menses became regular and pains left me entirely."

The monthly sickness reflects the condition of a woman's health. Any woman whose menstruation is unnatural may look for serious trouble to develop at any time.

MRS. ANNA LACY, Ross, Iowa, writes:

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—I was troubled with female weakness, irregular and painful menstruation. I suffered so every month that I was obliged to go to bed, but thanks to your medicine I am now well. I would advise all women who suffer as I did to use Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."

MISS MARY GOMES, Aptos, Cal., writes:

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—After receiving your letter I began the use of your remedies, taking both Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Blood Purifier. I am now regular every month and suffer no pain. Your medicine is the best that any suffering girl can take."

Mrs. Pinkham's advice is invaluable help to all women who suffer. It is absolutely free. Her address is Lynn, Mass.

MRS. EDNA ELLIS, Higginsport, Ohio, writes:

"I am a school teacher, have suffered agony monthly for ten years My nervous system was a wreck. I suffered with pain in my side and had almost every ill known. I had taken treatment from a number of physicians who gave me no relief. One specialist said no medicine could help me, I must submit to an operation. I wrote to Mrs. Pinkham, stating my case, and received a prompt reply. I took Lydia E Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and followed the advice given me and now I suffer no more. If any one cares to know more about my case, I will cheerfully answer all letters."

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound | Cures All Female Ills.

$5000 REWARD Owing to the fact that some skeptical people have from time to time questioned the genuineness of the testimonial letters we are constantly publishing, we have deposited with the National City Bank of Lynn, Mass., $5,000, which will be paid to any person who will show that the above testimonials are not genuine, or were published before obtaining the writer's special permission.—LYDIA E. PINKHAM MEDICINE CO., LYNN, MASS.